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POETICS AND PARALLELISM: SOME COMMENTS ON JAMES KUGEL'S *THE IDEA OF BIBLICAL POETRY*

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James Kugel is one of the most disturbingly brilliant and paradoxical of biblical critics, a poet, gifted with astonishing literary sensitivity, who recoils from its exercise, who writes with compelling passion and detached irony. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* is a pleasure to read and was obviously fun to write, a book which reminds us, through its mastery of critical rhetoric and immense learning, of the playfulness of being a scholar, a consummate craftsman, and thus undermines its own importance; one feels that for Kugel writing about the fallacies of interpretation and the phenomonology of remote texts is a pastime (and bread and butter), compared to the vital business of finding words for himself. The argument, to summarize it briefly, is that each generation has projected its own conventions and concept of poetry onto the Bible, which admits no such category; this further reduces the authority of the interpreter, including Kugel himself, since he too is implicated in the exposure. The last pages are a plea for such awareness. For example, wittingly or not, it is a masterpiece of deconstruction, the fashionable sado-masochistic genre whose ultimate victim is the practitioner himself, created by the illusions he unravels. The other side of this, however, is religious, and therein lies the book's mystery and urgency. For the critic is writing about the source of his tradition, the poet about the roots of his words. The text has an otherness, infinitely generative of interpretation, for which the book is quest—the Torah behind its seventy faces[1]—which is yet 'intimately ours', in Kugel's words. If, literally, it tells us of 'Joseph-our-ancestor',[2] who we are, how our world has come to be, it is alienated by the language of scholarship, urbane, occidental, with its objective distance, its fear of intimacy. Kugel, nevertheless, writes

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this language, examining the conventions of the fraternity to which he belongs, a *via negativa* perhaps, the only poetic language available for communicating that which is beyond interpretation.

For this reason one never knows whether Kugel has a bee in his bonnet or a tongue in his cheek, which makes life very difficult for his commentators.[3] This is especially true of his tireless and tedious polemic against literary-criticism of the Bible,[4] which, one suspects, is both a rhetorical stance, designed to foment controversy, and expressive of a persistent anxiety. Concomitantly, it is not clear whether all literary-criticism comes under stricture, or only what, more often than not, passes for it in biblical studies.[5] In particular, Kugel is vexed by the sacred status of the Bible, which makes it qualitatively different from all other literature, and cannot be accounted for in literary-critical discourse. For this reason, Kugel avers, it can be no more than the modern equivalent of Midrash.[6] I discuss the rights and wrongs of his argument in a forthcoming article in *Comparative Criticism*.[7] For the moment, suffice it to say that it displaces his central problem of alienated and hence ironic language, the sole medium available to him.

The book is divided into two parts, originally separate undertakings:[8] a discussion of the parallelistic line in poetry and prose, and a history of its divergent paths in Jewish and Christian interpretation, which amounts almost to a history of western civilization. Parallelism, the technique whereby the second half of a line is made in some way to correspond to the first, has acquired, until recently, a semi-metrical status, as the formal constituent of Hebrew verse, as that which distinguishes it from prose, whether or not supplemented by metre. The assumption that half-lines are equivalent has provided both a framework for understanding, usually reduction, and endless opportunities for taxonomy. Lowth's three categories of parallelism—synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic—have greatly multiplied. Kugel attempts to explode this consensus, first through showing that parallelism is a variable, ranging from near-perfect synonymity to barely discernible resemblance, and secondly through arguing that the parallel is often not the point of parallelism, that the similarity may signify less than the difference. For example, in Eccl. 7.1, *ṭôb šēm miššemen ṭôb wĕyôm hammāwet miyyôm hiwwāl^{e}dô*, 'Better a name than good oil, and the day of death than the day of birth', the perfect symmetry yokes the commonplace to the absurd; only after further reflection do we realize that the day of death leaves us with a

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name, while at the day of birth we are entirely physical, fragrant with possibility, but nameless.[9] The suggestion of analogy produced by the parallelism forces us to seek it in unlike terms; in this way parallelism functions like metaphor.[10] Moreover, the second part of the verse—*B*, in Kugel's shorthand (p. 2)—is clearly climactic; the first part (*A*) functions only as a disingenuous logical support to this conclusion. In another of Kugel's examples (p. 9), Isaiah 1.3, 'An ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's trough', B intensifies A, since the ass is proverbially more stupid than the ox, more cognizant of its trough than its owner.[11] Kugel in general convinces one by the brilliance of his local exegeses.[12] He argues that the parallel line is not B = A, but B completes A; B's essential characteristic is that it comes after A, 'seconds' it. This accounts for the sharpness of much Hebrew verse.[13]

Kugel then turns to the poetics of Ugarit (pp. 23-40). He maintains that the free interchange of tricola and bicola, with occasional isolated clauses, tells against any constitutive structural theory; the addition of C to A + B, not as a pleasing 'variation', but as a persistent but intermittent intruder, destroys the regularity of a familiar convention (pp. 26-27). Here I cannot follow him. If it is the parallel line that is constant, it does not matter whether C caps it, or B caps it.[14] There are good discussions of fixed pairs and repetitive parallelisms, illustrating the general contention that differences are more important than similarities, that B's essential virtue is that it goes beyond A. The preoccupation with 'fixed pairs', for instance, as evidence for a stock of conventional synonyms inherited by the Hebrew poets from their Canaanite predecessors and compiled to facilitate oral composition,[15] frequently mistakes natural association for arcane tradition,[16] and focusses attention on the pair (sun/moon, day/night, house/palace, etc.) as a means for equating the two halves of the line, instead of the material attached to it, the real point of poetic interest.[17] In any case, even an entirely tautologous parallelism still creates a difference, an otherness. An extreme example is the Ugaritic formula of drinking from 'a cup (*ks*) in one hand, a flagon (*krpn*) in both hands'. It is not a question, Kugel says, of which statement is true, nor even of creating a poetic 'shimmer', as Albright proposes, but that B goes one better than A; it exploits the drama of parallelism for its own sake. Parallelism here becomes a purely mannerist device, irrespective of content.[18]

For this reason the practice of 'distribution', of paraphrasing the

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line by recombining its elements, destroys the dialectic of parallelism; it assumes, as Kugel points out, that the two halves coexist simultaneously. It is not a true paraphrase, since the parallelism, the built-in afterthought, is part of the meaning. The same fallacy, that the two halves are equivalent, has given rise to the concept of the 'ballast variation', that where a syntactic constituent is missing in B, another may be expanded simply to compensate for it. Kugel shows that the ballast is often the point of the variation, and the line is compressed precisely to accommodate it. An example we have already considered is Isaiah 1.3.

A further and decisive objection to the persistent belief that parallelism is the formal constituent of biblical poetry is that many poems do not exhibit it. Psalm 23 is perhaps the most celebrated example (pp. 49-51). This leads straight to Kugel's central issue: what is the nature of biblical poetry? First, however, he discusses, well, how B contributes to the satisfying closure of the parallelistic line (pp. 55-56), that the function of parallelism is to establish enough symmetry to form a connection (p. 57), and that the vast majority of lines in the Psalter and other poetic books of the Bible are characterized by it (p. 56). It is ironic that elsewhere he criticizes Jan Fokkelman and others for their discovery of intricate structures in biblical narrative, on the grounds that the correspondences are not perfect.[19] As in the case of parallelism, it is not absolute symmetry that needs to be demonstrated, or is even practically attainable, but merely the existence of a pattern.

So far, this is a very good and valuable survey. The observation that parallelism is not a necessary formal constituent of biblical poetry is becoming commonplace,[20] and indeed all Kugel's conclusions have been succinctly anticipated by D.N. Freedman,[21] but no one has examined so sensitively and with such zest how the parts of the line interact, what is its dynamic, or has so decisively broken through the habit of Linnaean classification that still gives parallelism an initiatory, specialist character, differentiating poetry and prose, art, acquired after long apprenticeship, and ordinary speech.

Edward L. Greenstein, in his paper on Kugel's book at the last SBL meeting,[22] objected to Kugel's description of parallelism as follows:

> 'Biblical parallelism', he (Kugel) says, 'is of one sort, "A, and what's more, B," or of a hundred sorts' (p. 58). Kugel opts for the single principle—'A, and what's more, B.' I would opt for the latter, 'a

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hundred sorts.' Even within parallelism, variations generate finely tuned shades of meaning.

This is a false argument, since it leaves out the crucial last five words of Kugel's sentence: 'Biblical parallelism is of one sort . . . or of a hundred sorts; *but it is not three*' (my italics). Kugel does not say that there are not a hundred forms of parallelism, only that they have something in common, namely parallelism, namely A + B. It is precisely 'the finely tuned shades of meaning' that Kugel is concerned to demonstrate. Besides, in the event, and quite inexplicably, Greenstein does not opt for a hundred sorts of parallelism, but only one—exact duplication of syntactic structure. As Collins has shown in his highly interesting if dizzying study of prophetic syntax, this, the supposed archetype of parallelism, is not especially prevalent.[23] But this takes us to different, and difficult, terrain: Greenstein and not Kugel.

Kugel claims that his programme is implicitly anti-Lowthian, since in his view all parallelism is really 'synthetic'. In reality, Lowth might have had no trouble agreeing with this. In a sense, Kugel is rescuing Lowth from his commentators, who have generally disregarded his 'synthetic' category as a vague catch-all term.[24] Synonymity and antithesis are the extremes between which all parallelism wanders—as Kugel demonstrates. He concludes with four verses in which an identical A is paralleled by a different B, and remarks that the differences cannot be explicated using Lowth's categories. Greenstein shows, in by far the best part of his paper, how each B is delicately appropriate to the theme of its Psalm. This is hardly, however, an objection to Kugel.

The second chapter, called 'Poetry and Prose', is far less consistent. Its essence is that our distinction between 'poetry' and 'prose' is foreign to the Bible, and, if not entirely inappropriate, inexact: we would do better to use the Bible's own names for its genres, instead of importing Hellenistic categories. This is because there is no formal criterion, no master key, neither metre nor parallelism, that serves to define biblical poetry, despite the efforts of scholars through the ages to find it. Parallelism is widespread in prose as well as inconstant in poetry. Instead there is a continuum, involving many different elements, in which both poetry and prose participate. Kugel is by and large right in his discussion of the function of parallelism in prose and its relation to poetry, though unconvincing in some of his

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examples (e.g. Ex. 2.1-7). In denying the absolute difference, he has really set the cat among the pigeons; but he has also set himself a problem. For if it has no rule, what is it that makes biblical 'poetry' relatively 'poetic'? And if parallelism is not a formal constituent, what is it?

Kugel's answer to the second question is that parallelism is a, or rather *the*, rhetorical trope of the Bible, its one way of producing a heightened persuasive effect. 'Poetry' uses parallelism more often than 'prose', because it is more heightened than prose, and more dependent on rhetoric. The more rhetorical the prose, the more poetic it feels. But 'poetry' in the Bible has other means for making itself special, for distinguishing itself from ordinary speech, that interact with parallelism. In particular, Kugel cites varieties of ellipsis, such as the elimination of particles, articles, conjunctions, and the suppression of a major consituent in a 'double-duty' construction, that emphasize the disjunctive, difficult and strange nature of poetic language. The double-duty construction, for example, conjoins A & B indissolubly, and thereby separates them more sharply from the surrounding clauses; avoiding conjunctions or relative particles juxtaposes them, making their relationship a matter of tension, doubt and imagination.

According to Kugel, then, parallelism, the terse, subtly differentiated couplet, is the 'highest form of heightening' known to the biblical writer; the example he gives is *ṣaddîq kattāmār yiprāḥ k^{e}'erez ball^{e}bānôn yiśgeh*, 'The righteous man flourishes like a palm-tree, like a cedar in Lebanon he grows great' (Ps. 92.13). But the Bible cannot consist of skyscrapers. Hence the fine gradation of formality and concentration overrides any sharp polarization of poetry and prose. Moreover, the tendency towards terseness and the 'sharp' correspondence of A and B contributes to the simplification of syntax that many have observed is characteristic of biblical verse, and which Michael O'Connor has attempted to codify as a system of constrictions. As a final flourish, Kugel transforms a 'prose' narrative line into a parallelistic set, to illustrate the necessary ellipsis of subordinate clauses, the different possibilities of achieving closure, and the way B interacts with A.

The pigeons are already protesting; for example, Robert Alter is writing a companion to his *Art of Biblical Narrative* on the distinctive techniques of biblical poetry. If battle is to be joined, I should declare myself on Kugel's side; in my view, there is no absolute dividing line

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between poetry and prose in the Bible. But there are differences, to which, I think, Kugel pays insufficient attention. Further the issues are more complex, and less unique to the Bible, than he suppposes.

First I will introduce briefly a third participant, the French critic Henri Meschonnic, for moral support and to ramify the discussion.[25] Meschonnic argues that the Hellenistic distinction between poetry and prose reflects a more inclusive one between form and content, and the priority of reason over rhythm; the Platonic idealization of reason finds political expression in 'reason of state', and centralized autocracy. The Bible, however, is constituted by rhythm, as codified in the Massoretic system of *ṭ*^{ec}*amîm*;[26] every element of speech contributes to this rhythm, that is essentially empirical, comes to life when articulated; thought is inseparable from breathing. In reading the Bible, we must avoid our habitual question, 'What is it trying to say?' The signification of the words is thus only part of the meaning. Meschonnic aphoristically schematizes the opposition as 'Meaning (*sens*) is Greek, rhythm is Jewish', and assigns the Jew the place of the repressed signifier in Western civilization.

Kugel is more accurate, from Meschonnic's point of view, when he describes parallelism as a 'habit of mind' (p. 31) rather than a 'rhetorical trope' (p. 86), since the latter already introduces the opposition between thought and expression. It is conducive to closer reading that Meschonnic correspondingly stresses the significance and interdependence of every particle of discourse. But there are two issues which Meschonnic really contributes and for which I have invoked him. The first is the assumption that there is a fundamental difference between form and content, the quest for a purely structural principle for defining biblical poetry. The second is the assumption that the Bible is qualitatively different from all literature in that it resists such definition.

For what is surprising to a critic coming from outside the discussion is its insularity, especially considering the cultural breadth of many of its participants. It would appear to be assumed tacitly that poetry in general can be defined metrically, and that there are absolute criteria for distinguishing poetry and prose. The twentieth century, with its metrical anarchy, would leave such critics nonplussed. Yet one of them, Kugel, is a twentieth-century poet; another, Alter, is a major critic. More generally, there are no clear divisions; Kugel's 'vast middle ground' is universal. Some of Shakespeare's speeches are typeset as poetry and prose according to the edition one follows.

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Before the convention of lineation the ambiguity would be even greater. Some poetry can be scanned; a colleague of mine has shown that the Scots writer, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, uses anapaests consistently. More to the point, all imaginative prose has a poetic quality; and a great deal of poetry is prosaic. Poetics concerns both media; hence it is no objection to a theory that it is equally applicable to prose. Likewise, the equation, which Meschonnic takes for granted, of poetry with form and prose with content, is, to say the least, oversimplistic. One might say that these are extremes, with a shopping list (*pace* William Carlos Williams) at one end of the scale and Jabberwocky at the other. But this too is imprecise: for 'prose' works in a different way, is trying to do something other than poetry.

Clearly, as Kugel repeats, there is some point in speaking of 'poetry' and 'prose' in the Bible, and few people have difficulty in recognizing the difference. But it is not simply a difference in quality, that poetry is more 'heightened' than prose. In what sense is a great poem, like Psalm 23, more 'heightened' than a great narrative, such as Genesis 22? The latter is not an example of 'low rhetorical style', to use a term with which Kugel suggests we might replace 'prose' (p. 302). Instead, 'poetry' and 'prose' are on a continuum whose extremes are not 'high' and 'low', nor 'form' and 'content', but two linguistic relations to reality.

There is a complicating factor. How do we recognize poetry? For us it is easy; we see the pattern on the page, and go through the critical motions. In other words, there is a context marker, that enables us to respond to it as poetry, whereas we react differently to, say, an Income Tax Return. The very same passage may read equally well but quite differently as poetry or prose according to context. 'O Rose! Thou art sick!' could be the beginning of a letter or a diagnosis. In biblical poetry, likewise, there are context-markers: a passage introduces itself as Song, has been collected in the book of Psalms. Thus in addition to its intrinsic differences, poetic language may distinguished from prose by a certain frame of reference. We come to it with expectations that condition our interpretation, and enable us to confirm our initial identification; if they are not forthcoming, we may conclude that we were mistaken. In any discussion, it is well to be aware of these signals, some of which are purely conventional notations for 'poetry', like an alphabetic acrostic or lineation, and some of which arise from the discourse itself, and indicate its character. As with Gregory Bateson's concepts of deutero- and

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primary learning, the former enable us to be sensitive to the latter.[27] We must attend to the beginnings of discourse, how a passage identifies itself as poetry or prose, both to disentangle the conventional from the essential, and as a heuristic guide. There is always a subjective element, that interprets the signals in one way or another. It may be further objected, and Kugel does so object (p. 69), that the Israelites had no word for poetry and hence our reaction is anachronistic. Poetry, it would appear, cannot exist unless there is a word for it—a somewhat Whorfian hypothesis. Rather, the Israelites had many words for poetry, more or less specific or inclusive, perhaps because it was important to them. For example, *šîr* can refer to 'prayer (*tᵉpillâ*) to the living God' (Ps. 42.9), to the ditties of fools (Eccl. 7.6), and to the Song of Songs. In the first instance, Psalm 42.9, *šîr* in 'By night his song is with me, prayer to the living God' is not noticeably different from *zᵉmirôt* in '(God) who gives songs (*zᵉmirôt*) in the night' (Job 35.10). Thus Kugel is a little disingenuous when he claims that there were a great number of genre classifications in the Bible, for he disregards the degree of overlap or synonymity between them. Furthermore, a distinction is not necessarily to be made on the basis of the manner of performance, as he suggests; it is not clear, for example, whether in 1 Kings 5.12 *māšāl* is differentiated from *šîr* in being a spoken or literary form (p. 69), or simply in having a different style or content. Finally, if there are a great many words for poetry, biblical Hebrew has no adequate word for prose; Israel's unique contribution to ancient literature, the great narrative cycle, is nameless. This lack of a suitable term is painfully clear if one considers *tôlᵉdôt*, which never loses its association with genealogy; at best it functions as a metaphor (as in Gen. 2.4) and a marker for time. The difference between 'poetry' and 'prose' would then be that between 'marked' and 'unmarked' texts, special, often ritualized language, and ordinary speech. In a sense, these correspond to Kugel's 'high' and 'low' rhetorical categories. But it is not, in my view, that prose is less rhetorical, persuasive, or carefully constructed than poetry, but that it has a different referent: namely, ordinary speech. Poetry is then not a name for a relative concentration of heightened linguistic effects, but for a language expressive of a different order. To take an analogy: nineteenth-century fiction devoted its enormous rhetorical resources to concealing the fact that it was fiction; its apparent referent is the real colloquial world. Thereby it seduced the reader to accept its dreaming as reality. Nineteenth-century poetry, on the

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other hand, sought to create a new language, free of contingency and worn convention, purified of dialect—to paraphrase Mallarmé—to express its vision, the inscape of things, to achieve illumination. The orientation towards ordinary speech is a clue to the nature and significance of biblical prose, that its practitioners were the first to foster the illusion of reality, as part of the Bible's sacralization of time and the everyday. Its cultic expression is the regularization of the life cycle and the material culture through the complex code of purity and impurity.[28]

Some context-markers will be overlooked, while others may be mistaken; we may domesticate the Bible to accord with our own poetic expectation. This is the basis of Kugel's criticism: we lack 'literary competence' to read the Bible, since we do not know its conventions.[29] Again, it is surprising that he should think the Bible is unique in this respect; the task of deconstructive criticism is to expose our incapacity to read *any* literature without imposing upon it our ideologies and values. But the thrust of literature, and certainly of the Bible, is contrary to this: it is that it can communicate across time. The proof of our 'literary competence' is that the Bible does relate to our interests and our sensibilities. The fundamental conventions of story-telling and poetic expression are archetypal, otherwise we could not respond to the verbal art of many different cultures and eras. It is true that the Bible is a little strange to us, that we need time to learn its metaphorical language, to adjust to its style, and that this task is never-ending; that means only that interpretation is never complete. The critic is, moreover, a translator, who facilitates communication between his age and that of the text,[30] through the *illo tempore* of story and dream they share. 'The Idea of Biblical Poetry' is necessarily *our* idea of biblical poetry, since it is only meaningful insofar as it corresponds to our complex idea of poetry; a book entitled 'The Biblical Idea of Poetry' would be very different. But our recognition of biblical poetry is grounded in delimitations presented to us by the text, explicitly and implicitly; to what extent the Bible is a self-conscious reflection on poetry and language is another issue.[31]

If 'poetry' and 'prose' are the ends of a continuum, it is preferable to speak of a poetic function more or less present in language, even in texts marked as 'prosaic'. This is especially true of the Bible, in which prose and poetry constantly interact, and which could, in a sense, be seen as a dialogue between poetry and prose. In a classic but still

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valid formulation by Roman Jakobson, 'the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination'.[32] The axis of selection is the paradigm, the list of concurrent alternatives from which a word is chosen; the axis of combination is the syntagm, the meaningful sequence it generates, through its interaction with other, necessarily different, constituents. All members of a paradigm are in principle equivalent; they share a property that makes them candidates for inclusion in the sentence. The poetic function, according to Jakobson, institutes equivalence as part of the sequence; as well as its essential syntactic or semantic individuality, a word is linked to others through chains of correspondence. In the phrase 'the horrible Harry', paronomasia (hrr . . . hrr) suggests that there is something intrinsically horrible about the very word Harry. The equivalence may be formal, such as the notional isochrony of metrical units; it may be conceptual, the identification of discrete terms. At all events, it institutes a counterpoint between overt and concomitant meanings, the sequence and the pattern, and between time and timelessness. If each moment is alike, the confident progression of the sentence, in which each unit has its place, is subverted in a complex series of equations.

There are several interdependent markers for poetry and prose—or rather the poetic and prosaic ends of the continuum—all of which indicate the presence, to a greater or lesser extent, of the poetic function, and the orientation towards a particular mode of reality. They are best listed summarily, so as not to isolate them from each other:

i. The sense of time in the work. Prose presupposes sequential time, e.g. history, or law, which is potential history; poetry concerns timelessness, time as recurrent pattern and stillness, in which past and future are present through dream and recollection.

ii. Prose preserves an often ironic objective distance between the writer, his audience, and his subject-matter. For example, the biblical narrator presents events as they happened, events that do not ostensibly concern him, to us who are inconceivably distant; in appearance at least, the events speak for themselves. In poetry, there is a communion between the singer and the audience; what happens is experienced timelessly, in the words of the song. It is more personal than prose, expressing the feelings and sensations of the poet (e.g. in the Psalms, or through his personae in the Song of Songs), and inviting their sympathetic adoption by the audience. Thus, in

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determining the nature of what we are reading, we look to (a) how it establishes its sense of time, and (b) the dramatic frame of reference.

iii. Prose accordingly represents everyday life, activities, and speech: the life of sequential time and the subjective ego, differentiated from others in a common consciousness, the life which is regulated by law and from which narrative emerges; poetry is the language of liminal situations, of Job amid dust and ashes, or the enclosed garden of lovers, and, in particular, of ritual speech, when the boundaries of the ego are blurred, and which mediate between life and death, the ordinary and the sacred, timelessness and time. Thus we must also look to the *context*.

iv. Prose perceives the world through relations of contiguity, temporal and spatial, i.e. metonymy; poetry expresses it metaphorically, through relations of likeness and difference, and ultimately seeks the unity of phenomena, e.g. the recurrence of identical moments, the song of all the creatures.

Not all these distinctive features will co-occur; for example, in epic poetry the emotions of the singer are subordinated to the collective experience; and there are other context-markers, which may be related to other features. Poetry normally, for example, draws attention to the voice, the sensual/non-signifying element of language, as part of its fusion of sign and referent, and its invocation of human presence. Whether more or less does not matter; for my argument is that the recognition of poetry is a complex experience, involving many variables, and relative to prose; and that the continuum between the two modes, and the way they interact, is as important as their difference.

A second weakness of Kugel's book, surprising in view of its pretensions, is that it takes no account of genre. On the one hand, he argues that 'prose' and 'poetry' in the Bible are relative categories, and that perhaps we should use the Bible's own names for its literary forms; on the other, he makes no attempt either to differentiate those forms—calling its songs songs, its prayers prayers, etc. (p. 302)—in relation to style, or, conversely but more practically, to examine how parallelism functions differently according to context, as recognized by us in response to the text's signals. The failure to correlate parallelism with genre results, perhaps, from the mystification of the Bible as uniquely resistant to our poetic categories, whereas the realization that poetry is not differentiated esoterically from prose

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should make it more accessible of investigation, and should direct attention to the different purposes to which it is put.

Kugel's description of parallelism, as a rhetorical trope whose nuclear structure is A + B, is thus insensitive to what persuasive effect is required, and how parallelism is adapted to meet it. It is an all-purpose instrument, that performs its one duty, that of 'heightening', through thick and thin. This makes some of his statements and examples unconvincing. For example, the 'seconding', sharp, quality of parallelism is clearly most applicable and foregrounded in Wisdom literature (such as the example from Ecclesiastes) and prophetic contentions—it is an argumentative, dialectical medium. But love poetry has very different requirements; it persuades us of the organic coherence of its world through a series of subtly interconnected yet isolated phrases, each of which is parallel to the other. There is a minimum of end-stopping, and very little terseness; it seduces through relaxation and its invitation to take pleasure in each moment and in each phrase. The egotistic cleverness or moral superiority of the Prophets and Wisdom literature is thus reversed; it is an uncleverness, almost a natural language—the language of spring and of eros. Thus, in the description of the spring in the Song of Songs 2.10-13, *kî hinnēh hassᵉtāw 'ābār, haggešem ḥālap hālak lô*, 'For behold the winter has passed, the rain has been and gone',[33] is a parallelistic couplet, in which the seconding function of B fills in the atmospheric space of the season, but is vastly subordinated to the sequence: it leads straight to C, 'the flowers appear in the earth', and so to D, E, F, and G; the pause between B and C is no greater than that between A and B, except by formalistic fiat. The last line, *hattᵉ'ēnâ ḥāntâ paggêhā wᵉhaggᵉpānîm sᵉmādār nātᵉnû rēaḥ*, 'The fig tree makes redolent its young figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance', is as closely worked a parallelism as it is possible to achieve, on every linguistic level[34], yet it produces no sense of climax—B does not go beyond A—nor is it isolated from the rest of the sequence. The patterning corresponds exactly to the theme of the passage; the intense concentration on each phrase and sensation, as if too rich to lose, is combined with their breathless linkage, in which each moment evokes the other, and cannot linger. Likewise, spring, and love, pass in a trice; 'the beloved, the fair one' must seize it before it is too late (2.10, 13). Hence the many indices for time in this passage.

Again, the Psalms often present complex syntactic units, since they foster a magniloquence that cannot be contained in the tight

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form A + B. An example is Psalm 92.13, which, as we have seen, Kugel cites as the quintessence of parallelism: *ṣaddîq kattāmār yiprāḥ kᵉʾerez balᵉbānôn yiśgeh*, 'The righteous man flourishes like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon he grows great'. It continues, however, with a subordinate phrase *šᵉtûlîm bᵉbêt yhwh*, 'Planted in the house of the Lord', and a dependent clause *bᵉḥaṣrôt ʾᵉlōhênû yaprîḥû*, 'in the courts of our God they flourish',[35] followed in v. 15 by an adverbial clause of time ('Still they will bear fruit') and in v. 16 by an infinitive ('To tell that'). In what sense, then, is there a closural click after *yiśgeh*, 'he grows great'? The semantic and syntactic break between A and B, reinforced by the hard consonant *k*, is far greater than that between *yiśgeh* and *šᵉtûlîm*. The dynamic of the verse continues to the end of the Psalm.

I have noticed that there are several instances in which Kugel distorts the rhythm of a verse by abstracting a parallelism from it. An example, which I have already used, is *yômām yᵉṣawweh yhwh ḥasdô ûballaylâ šîrōh ʿimmî*, 'By day the Lord sends forth his love, and at night his song is with me' (Ps. 42.9), which is in fact completed by *tᵉpillâ lᵉʾēl ḥayyāy*, 'prayer to the God of my life'; if 'his song is with me' is the climax, the last phrase is an awkward and meaningless appendage.[36]

This leads to my last major criticism of Kugel: he entirely ignores larger units. Poetry often marks itself as special by its intricate structures. Correspondences develop between lines and between parts of a poem, unifying it and breaching the autonomy of the closed line. One of the virtues of Greenstein's paper is its attention to the interweaving of lines and themes. There are good discussions by Collins and O'Connor, using a syntactic model; it would be tedious to illustrate the point at length. We have seen an example of two (in fact three) consecutive parallel lines in Psalm 92.13, 14, and 15:

> The rightous man flourishes like the palm tree, like the cedar of Lebanon he grows great,
> Planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God they flourish,
> Still they will bear fruit in old age, they will be full of sap and green . . .

Likewise, the enticement 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away' encloses the description of the spring in the Song 2.10-13; in the centre we have a Janus-parallelism,[37] a pun that matches and

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focusses preceding and succeeding phrases, that are linked by the word *'ereṣ/'arṣēnū*, 'earth, land': 'The flowers appear in the *earth*, the time of *singing/pruning* has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our *land*'. The dove recurs as image of the girl in 2.14, and the vineyards in blossom in 2.15, to integrate 2.10-13 in the larger concentric structure 2.8-17.

A wonderful example of the gradual expansion of a single parallelism over a series of verses into an exhaustively complex imprecation is the opening of Job's first speech (Job 3.3-10).

My point is not simply that there are these larger units, which must be taken into account in any theory, but that they are no different in kind from smaller units. The correspondence between two adjacent clauses is no more constitutive of poetry than that between two adjacent verses, or even distant verses, nor is it more frequent. That so much energy has been spent on parallelism within the line perhaps only reflects the fact that it is more noticeable, and that until recently critics have not been alert to the structural intricacy of biblical poetry. It is a good illustration of how, as Kugel argues, our preconceptions condition our interpretation.

But there is a further point: that correspondence, on any and every linguistic level, is characteristic of poetry, because it institutes equivalence as its constitutive principle. In Jakobson's succinct formulation, 'anything sequent is a simile'.[38] What then is special about parallelism in biblical poetry that instantaneously communicates its authentic formal tone, and characterizes the vast majority of its verses? Parallelism, in which A regularly produces and corresponds to B, generates a sequence whose two halves are equivalent.[39] It is the simplest trick of poetry, a habit of poetic construction that indicates the presence of the poetic function, the projection of the principle of equivalence into the sequence. Analogously, metre segments the sequence into units that are notionally equivalent; similarity of sound suggests—at least raises the question of—congruence of meaning. 'Words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning' (Jakobson, *Linguistics and Poetics*, 371). Moreover, once the principle has been established, one can do almost anything with it. For example, natural stress in English poetry rarely coincides with formal metre. The expectation that B will be like A, once internalized, will tolerate any number of differences.

In my view, then, parallelism is the Biblical equivalent of metre, a frequent but not mandatory marker of poetry, whose function is to

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assert equivalence as constitutive of the sequence.[40] What then of poems that are non-parallelistic, like Psalms 23 and 122? Conversely, what is the function of parallelism in prose? I propose to approach these questions through a comparison of the beginning of a non-parallelistic poem, Psalm 23, with a prose narrative, Genesis 22, to show how it identifies itself as poetry through the various context-markers I have already outlined: the sense of time, of reality, the relationship to text and audience, and the metaphoric or metonymic modes. I will then consider its non-conformity with parallelism, the established convention.

Thus Psalm 23 communicates its genre through its opening metaphor: *yhwh rō'î*, 'The Lord is my shepherd': present, personal, inviting audience participation, and entirely divorced from everyday reality: it refers, as the occasion for the composition, its dramatic frame, to a moment of illumination, a liminal condition between the human and the transcendent that is in any case typical of poetry. The classification is endorsed through the repetition of the criteria: the metaphor expands until it is replaced by others; place names are allegorical; the immediacy of the initial present becomes the eternity of the conclusion. Genesis 22, however, reveals itself as prose through its opening words *way^{e}hî 'aḥar hadd^{e}bārîm hā'ēlleh*, 'And it came to pass after these things', that situate it in a temporal continuum; through its introductory phatic formulae, 'Abraham!', 'Here I am!', whose sole function is to open a channel of communication in language governed by social conventions and distances; through its everyday actions and ordinary speech; through the metonymic mode that sets one event in proximity to the next, and defines things through their attributes (e.g. Isaac, your only son, whom you love) and contextual relations (the altar, the wood, the knife, the hand); and through the impersonality and objectivity of the narrative, that recounts the facts of long, long ago to an audience excluded from them.

Psalm 23 is not entirely innocent of parallelism: it contrives to suggest it while teasing us with the expectation. In the first verse, the metaphorical equivalence *yhwh rō'î*, 'The Lord is my shepherd', is followed by another two word, brief vocalic/liquid phrase *lō' 'eḥsār*, 'I shall not want,' in apposition to it; we are predisposed to find some connection between the two statements, since this is, we assume, intelligible discourse: 'I shall not want' defines the condition of the Lord being my shepherd; it corresponds to it, semantically as well as

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phonetically. The second verse, 'On verdant meadows he grazes me, by restful waters guides me', is a perfectly-wrought symmetrical couplet; it seems, and in fact is, too good to be true. The listener, by this stage, his ears attuned to the convention, trusts to its continued presence. Moreover, in v. 3, *yanḥēnî bᵉmaʿgᵉlê-ṣedeq*, 'He leads me on just paths', corresponds to the imagery and construction of v. 2 and is echoed in v. 4a 'Also if I walk in the valley of the shadow of death',[41] and 4d, 'Your staff and your crook will comfort me',[42] with its paronomasia between *yᶜnaḥᵃmēnî*, 'will comfort me', and *yanḥēnî*, 'will lead me'. Thus the intrusion in 3a of *napšî yᵉšôbēb*, 'he restores my soul', a phrase that is too short and breaks the spell of pastoral perambulation, is not merely non-parallelistic but anti-parallelistic; moreover, it collaborates with *lᵉmaʿan šᵉmō*, 'for his Name's sake', at the end of the verse, both in length and in that they invoke—slightly distanced by the third person and the intervening phrase—the two poles of the dialogue that are brought together in *kî ʾattâ ʿimmādî*, 'for you are with me', in the next verse. Otherwise, *lᵉmaʿan šᵉmô*, 'for his Name's sake', could be accommodated comfortably into the sequence, as a short rapt coda; *napšî yᵉšôbēb* activates its non-conformity. In v. 4, the conjunctions *gam kî* introduce a new element, a quasi-narrative, hence a more relaxed 'prosaic' idiom; the sequence is foregrounded at the expense of equivalence. Moreover, the lengthened line can be divided into a very weak couplet: *gam kî-ʾēlēk / bᵉgêʾ ṣalmāwet*, 'Even if I should walk / in the valley of the shadow of death', or completed by the apodosis 'I will fear no evil', or its explanation 'for you are with me'. 'I will fear no evil' is consequently either an A or a B clause; 'for you are with me' is either B (or C) or A, complemented by 'Your staff and your crook, they will comfort me'; this, however, may be an isolated clause, or subdivided, with an emphatic caesura. Thus parallelism is confounded by ambiguity, which in fact is still more complicated. Instead of the seven well-articulated parallelisms of the Song of Songs 2.10-13, we have numerous possible correlations, none of which is very convincing. It is not that we lose the habit of parallelism, but that the verse resists it; this gives it some of its tension. Similarly in v. 3 *napšî yᵉšôbēb*, 'He restores my soul', interrupts the complacency of the otherwise very conventional structure and imagery, and forces us to consider it in relation to the poem. Finally, towards its close the poem returns to parallelism, as in the last verse:

'Also goodness and love will pursue me, all the days of my life;

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and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for the length of days'.

I would like to consider briefly the function of parallelism in prose, before returning to its rhetorical, 'tropical', significance, and repeating some of my conclusions. Parallelism in prose, as in poetry, is the sign of the poetic function. As Kugel argues, though it might be wearisome to reiterate, 'poetry' and 'prose' are relative categories, and literary prose always has a poetic quality. In particular, the prose of the Bible is a poeticization of the everyday, and possibly has its ideological component: asserting the significance of history and the mundane, i.e. it is one of the modes of expression of the theology of the Bible.[43] Biblical narratives are highly symbolized, intricately constructed; their distanced, historical and metonymic flow is in constant rapport with that which is timeless, personal—since they concern our ancestors, our very selves—and metaphoric in them. For example, in Genesis 22, 'Go to the land of Moriah' recalls Abraham's first commission in Genesis 12.1, 'Go to the land which I will show you', through the repeated phrase *lēk l^ekā*; this, as it were, is the completion, almost literally so, of his enterprise. Likewise, law has its metaphoric, timeless function, and its poetic means of expression.

The most obvious parallelisms in prose are those which appear to be exceptions: the resonant poetic couplet that interrupts the temporal flow, such as 'And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said / and the Lord did for Sarah as he had spoken' (Gen. 21.1), or, in my illustrative passage, 'Stretch not your hand against the lad / and do nothing whatsoever to him' (Gen. 22.12).[44] This is precisely their purpose: to mark and to hold the special moment, that thereby acquires a ritualistic, timeless quality. In the second instance, the wish to stop time in the nick has added urgency; in the previous verse, in any case, Abraham's actions are detailed in horrified slow motion. Furthermore, the parallelism represents the intrusion of the timeless, the poetic flash, the presence behind phenomena, into the narrative continuum, a clash of spheres and genres. Both the examples I have cited mark the anomalous encounter of the divine and the human, and thus human transcendence; for instance, Isaac's miraculous birth. God especially is associated with parallelism in biblical narrative, in part as an expansive index of his time; a good example is his discourse with Moses at the Burning Bush.

There is, however, another sort of parallelism in prose, which is seldom noticed, and is all-pervasive; it is what one might call, following Roman Jakobson, the 'coupling' of consecutive words and

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phrases. In the Genesis 22 narrative, for example, we have 'Take, I pray (*qaḥ-nā'*), your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go (*lēk-l'ka*)'. 'Your son, your only one . . . ' correspond to each other, likewise *qaḥ-nā'* matches *lēk-l'kā*. In the next verse, after a flurry of early morning activities with much the same content—preparing for a sacrificial journey—two verbs are paired together: *wayyāqom wayyēlek*, 'and he arose and he went'. In the next verse, equally conventionally but somewhat more lengthily, hence obtrusively, *wayyiśā' 'abrāhām 'et-'ênāyw*,' And Abraham lifted up his eyes', evokes *wayyar'-'et-hammāqôm mērāḥōq*, 'and he saw the place from afar'. As with poetry, the couplings are compounded to form larger units, such as *qaḥ-nā' . . . lēk l'kā*. The essential difference is this: that whereas parallelism in poetry exploits disjunction, parallelism in prose supports conjunction. In the classic model, A is separated from B by a sharp caesura, and it is our task to correlate them, on the basis of assumed likeness and difference: (A + B) are equally paratactically divided from (C + D), and so on. In prose, however, parallelism has a metonymic component: it aligns things and events through contiguity, and thus helps to make seamless the temporal or emotional space. Abraham lifts up his eyes and *then* he sees; he rises and *then* goes; Isaac is the son, the only one, the loved one, all different aspects of the same person. The narrative moves forward by small and interconnected steps. Parallelism thus represents the poetic function in ordinary speech; equivalence, if you like, for the sake of the sequence. It also retains its association with poetry, through its use, for example, of ancient formulae, such as 'he lifted up his eyes, and saw . . . ' In this way, too, the language acquires a timeless quality, as part of a literary tradition.

Kugel describes parallelism as a or rather *the* rhetorical figure or trope of the Bible:

> Biblical parallelism is not a meter, although *materiae metricae* are affected by it; it is not consistent enough to be compared accurately with any of our well-known structures. At the same time, it would be incorrect to call parallelism a rhetorical figure or trope—though, as we shall see, this was commonly done by the Church Fathers. It was more like *the* trope, the one shape of elevated speech, 'A is so, (and) B is so.' The more intense the correspondence between clauses, the more obvious the structuredness, hence the formality, of the style. (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, p. 86)

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A rhetorical figure, Kugel seems to say, characterizes a style; it is an ornament, that persuades aesthetically, without reference to content. In terms of my essay, it is a context-marker, that tells us that we are engaged with poetry or poetic prose, and in this respect functions like metre. This, however, is to make rhetoric an entirely superficial craft, a kit of acquired frills with no intrinsic relationship to the content of the communication. The fallacy of this emerges if we consider the modern heir of the classical rhetorician, namely the advertising industry—or better still, read Judith Williamson's book on the subject;[45] persuasive technique is intimately connected with unconscious fantasy and ideology. Recent literary-critical study of tropes, such as metaphor, onomatopeia, etc., has shown how complex these phenomena are, and how indissociable are style, structure and content; such features are basic to the very meaning of poetry. Thus we have to examine the persuasive effect of parallelism; and be aware that we are dealing with a very elastic vocabulary.

Kugel's definition is somewhat surprising, because he shows, through the course of the book and with brilliant examples, that parallelism is a device for the diversification of meaning. B goes beyond A in any number of ways: it adds to it, qualifies it, contradicts it. Through parallelism the text becomes more complex and more ambiguous. This in turn complicates its rhetorical function, its effect on the reader. It generates tension through its implicit question, 'How is the sentence going to be completed?', and promotes ambiguity, hence anxiety. The presumption of equivalence forces us to imagine it, even when it is not apparent; the terseness of biblical poetry, on which Kugel lengthily comments, through its omission of syntactic particles assists this difficulty and multiplicity of interpretation. Thus the reader is forced to construct the poem, using his own creative resources; in a sense, the reader becomes the poet. Two halves of the clause are juxtaposed and held to be alike; the basic form of parallelism is metaphor. The righteous man flourishes like a palm tree or grows tall as a cedar in Lebanon: he does both or neither. By implication flourishing like a palm tree is somewhat like (or equals) growing like a cedar. A god takes a cup in one hand or a flagon in both hands: he does both or neither. Two alternative realities (or stories) are presented, which are identical. Or as Lorca puts it:

> Por las ramas del laurel
> vi dos palomas desnudas.

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La una era la otra
y las dos eran ninguna.

Through the branches of the laurel tree
I saw two naked doves.
The one was the other,
and both were neither. (*Casida de las palomas oscuras*)

Equivalence, the metaphoric principle, is the very essence of poetry. But we can go a little further. Parallelism is an elementary drama. A sets up a tension, and expectation, which B resolves. A is the desire which B fulfils. The pattern of wish and satisfaction is basic to our lives, and certainly to aesthetics. Of this wish-fulfilment[46] syndrome parallelism is the archetype. It thus represents both the omnipotent desire of the unconscious—its timelessness, its polymorphous symbolism—and the way we structure, make sense of, our lives. The rhythm of parallelism structures also the discourse of the Bible, as an attempt to make sense of history, to enclose it in a myth of a beginning and an end; it is thus fitting that it should be its most evocative and pervasive constituent.

There we must leave this discussion. In it I tried to follow Kugel's analysis of parallelism as closely as possible, so as to convey the virtues of his arguments and illustrations, and to suggest some of its limitations. I entirely neglected the major part of the book, the history of parallelism, fascinating and wildly entertaining as it is, in part because I am not qualified to discuss it seriously, and in part because of considerations of space. I argued that poetry and prose are the poles of a universal literary continuum, and that Kugel has ignored considerations of genre and larger structural units. This led me to a restatement of some of the older critical commonplaces, such as that parallelism is a formal characteristic of biblical poetry, and analogous to metre, in that it makes equivalence a part of the sequence. But I am restating old critical positions from Kugel's perspective. If Kugel's is a *via negativa*, exposing the errors and misreadings of a whole scholarly tradition, and culminating in a series of disclaimers—there is no poetry in the Bible, it is not what we call literature, nor truly accessible to literary analysis—mine is the beginning of a *via positiva*. It should be clear that I admire Kugel's book enormously, and that our approaches are complementary. As Kugel comments, 'everything remains to be said', not only about 'single lines or individual compositions' (p. 95), but about parallelism

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as it is perceived in each instance, as part of a living linguistic texture. But this also is true of metre.

NOTES

1. The Torah has seventy 'faces', corresponding to the seventy languages of the world, in all of which it was given at Mt Sinai (*B. Shabbat* 88b). There are variations on this idea, that the Torah has 600,000 faces, one for every Israelite present there (*Exodus Rabbah* 5.9); one for every created soul (*Exodus Rabbah* 28.6); and that God spoke in the voice of each individual (*ibid.*). Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 304, associates the idea that the Torah was given in each language—including, presumably, each critical language—of the world with the infinity of significance of each letter in the Kabbalah, the multiplicity of possible punctuations and word-divisions, and the rabbinic notion that there are two kinds of Torah, the Oral and the Written, that the written text is subject to constant reinterpretation according to each individual and generation.

2. 'We have shuddered to hear Joseph called "one of the most believable characters in Western literature," and not just because this statement puts the Bible on the wrong bookshelf. At such a remark one wants to object—on the model of the vaudevillian's "Who was that lady I saw you with last night?" "That ain't no lady, that's my wife"—and say that Joseph is no *character* at all, but someone far more intimately ours' (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 304). This, however, makes too strong a contrast between 'character' and 'ancestor'. I argue in a forthcoming article in *Comparative Criticism* that meaningful characters are always 'intimately ours'.

3. I have only seen the negative review by James Barr in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25th Dec. 1981, 1506. Otherwise I am dependent on perplexed oral reactions.

4. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* has been followed by 'On the Bible and Literary Criticism', *Prooftexts* 1 (1981), 217-234. An interesting criticism of Kugel's *Prooftexts* article is Adele Berlin's 'On the Bible as Literature' *Prooftexts* 2 (1982), 323-328, with a response by James Kugel (329-332).

5. He oscillates between the claim that the Bible is *not* literature (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 303; 'On the Bible and Literary Criticism', 219), and is beyond our literary competence; qualified approval of the best practitioners, citing specifically Shemaryahu Talmon and Robert Alter; and advocating that literary-criticism, as part of a synthesis of approaches, can 'take on the true calling of Midrash i.e. the ongoing canonization of Scripture' ('On the Bible and Literary Criticism', 234).

6. 'On the Bible and Literary Criticism', 234.

7. 'The Case of Kugel: do we find ourselves when we lose ourselves in the text?'

8. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, vii.

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9. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 10. The suggestion that the newborn child is 'fragrant with possibility' is my own. I have elsewhere (*Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* [Sheffield, 1983], 15ff.) suggested that there is an antithetical relationship between the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes; as a small illustration, in the Song the name of the Lover *is* oil (1.3), fragrant, diffuse, experienced sensually but also intangibly.

10. Cf. further below.

11. This very verse is treated as a *locus classicus* of synonymous parallelism, whose two halves repeat the same content in different terms, in R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1969), 965, according to Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 13 n. 29. This is a fine and ironic example of the 'drastic sort of levelling' that can result from not recognizing B's complex and dialectic relationship with A, the assumption that the meaning of a line is the lowest common denominator of its two halves.

12. He is not, however, infallible. For example, I am not convinced that the *qṭl* in Gen. 4.23 need necessarily be conditional rather than past—indeed, it makes more dramatic sense as the latter (cf. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 32); nor, in my view, does the exegesis of the Song of Songs 1.5, as an example of 'distribution' (*ibid.*, 41), have much support in the text.

13. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 11-12. James Barr, in his review of Kugel, criticizes his derivation of *ḥiddâ* ('riddle') from *ḥdd* ('sharp'); this is only an incidental suggestion, not crucial to his argument, as Barr seems to suggest, and in any case is supported by a plausible footnote (p. 12 n. 25), against which Barr does not argue, save to say that it is 'quite fanciful'.

14. On p. 52, however, Kugel makes precisely this point. In that case, he is wrong in stating, following G.D. Young, that, because ternary and binary lines interchange, parallelism 'is less constant, less structural than Lowth and his followers have implied'. As he concedes, parallelism does characterize the vast majority of 'poetic' lines in the Bible. Moreover, in Ugaritic poetry parallelism has, it seems to me, a far more formal quality than in Biblical poetry, as that which distinguishes between mythic narrative, set in an ever-present *illo tempore*, and historical narrative.

15. Kugel rightly comments that they are in no sense comparable to the 'oral formulae' of Homeric poetry or modern South Slav epic, since these are designed to fit a complex metre (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 34). Besides, the frequency of these formulae, and the explanation that they facilitated oral composition, have recently been called into question; cf. M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, 1980), 105-106.

16. Adele Berlin, in her paper 'Parallel Word Pairs: A Linguistic Explanation' at the recent SBL meeting (1982), contends that 'These are simply products of normal word-associations made by all competent speakers' (with thanks to the author).

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17. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 30. As Berlin puts it, 'it is the parallelism that activates the word pair'.

18. The quotation from Albright is from *History, Archeology, and Christian Humanism* (London, 1965), 95. Kugel discusses various examples in which B appears to 'correct' A, e.g. numeral + 1 formulae, or the Song for David and Saul (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 40-44). He suggests (44, also n. 26) that it is the modern critic's obtuseness, not Saul's ignorance of poetic convention, that mistakes the force of the parallelism *thousand—ten thousand*.

19. 'On the Bible and Literary Criticism', 225-226. In his rejoinder to Adele Berlin he resorts to the unpersuasive character of some of the correspondences. 'Chiasmatics', or 'chiasmania', as he calls it, is indeed a perilous business (*Prooftexts* 2, 230-231). But this does not invalidate Berlin's case that where a structure does exist with reasonable coherence it should be pointed out.

20. Cf. the introductory comments of O'Connor on what he calls the 'Standard Description' (*Hebrew Verse Structure*, 29-55), and of Collins in *Line Forms in Biblical Poetry* (Rome, 1978), 5ff. Both O'Connor and Collins substitute a syntactic model for the prevailing semantic/phonetic one, the first by codifying an elaborate system of constrictions and tropes that define the Hebrew verse line, while the second argues that the prophets—his study is confined to the prophetic writings—favoured certain sentence structures, used in particular ways. This will assist both the recognition of poetry and the analysis of individual passages.

21. 'Once it is recognized that parallelism is not a necessary characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and that many lines do not have this feature, it is interesting to observe how the poet deals with this potentially prosaic element. In some cases, the line stands as it is, indistinguishable from prose constructions, reflecting either the poverty of poetic imagination or the fact that the dividing line between poetry and prose is not a sharp one' (*Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy* [Winona Lake, 1980], 37). Freedman, however, proposes a system based on the total number of syllables—hence the average line-length—in a composition. But this will allow inordinate variation between lines, and consequently does not result in a plausible metrical system. See Kugel's criticism of Freedman's hypothesis, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 72 n. 20.

22. 'The Phenomenology of Parallelism'. With thanks to the author.

23. *Line Forms in Biblical Poetry*, 92ff.

24. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 12. Cf. *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy*, 37.

25. 'Le Rythme et la Traduction: entretien avec Henri Meschonnic', *Esprit*, Sept. 1982, 87-95. Cf. his monumental study, *Critique du Rythme* (Verdier, 1982), 466-75 and *passim*.

26. I.e. the system of notes or cantillation signs accompanying the text. According to Meschonnic, these codify the rhythm, and are an indispensable

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aid to the understanding and experience of the text; cf. his translation and discussion of Obadiah in the same issue of *Esprit*, 6-14. Kugel discusses the *ṭᶜamim* lengthily—and more critically (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 111-116). He considers that the development of the *ṭᶜamim* contributed to the forgetting of parallelism and the obscuring of the structure of Hebrew verse in early rabbinic exegesis.

27. Gregory Bateson, 'Social Planning and the Concept of Deutero-Learning', *Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind* (Granada, 1973), 133-149, argues that there are two stages of learning: (i) learning facts, responses to stimuli, etc.; (ii) learning *how* and *what* to learn, and being able to organize one's learning syntagmatically, according to context. *Deutero-learning* corresponds to the latter stage.

28. E.M. Zeusse, 'Taboo and the Divine Order', *JAAR* 42 (1974), 482-504, argues that sacrifice corresponds to the *metaphoric* substitution of the victim for a man and their fusion in the divine flame, while taboo—the system of purity and impurity—is a system of *metonymy* whereby everything is defined relative to the divine. The Torah, he claims, makes all life holy. Prose thus would express the metonymic mode, whereby sanctity survives in the world, hedged by ever-present taboo; poetry is associated with the momentary communion of sacrifice, often quite literally so. See further Julia Kristeva, 'Lire la Bible', *Esprit*, Sept. 1982, 142-152, on the relationship between psychoanalysis and biblical criticism, and her major study, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris, 1980). Kristeva argues that what is taboo is the mother-principle, as represented, for example, in fertility cults.

29. 'On the Bible and Literary Criticism', 222-230.

30. Cf. Meschonnic's comment in *Esprit*, 92, that translation is 'a metaphor of the original', and his distinction between false and true translation, i.e. between a translation that is functionally equivalent to the original and one that mistakes its philosophy, citing specifically the Septuagint version of Exodus 3.14. Meschonnic himself has attempted the poetic translation, using the Massoretic punctuation, of several biblical books. The lack of communication between contemporary biblical translation and modern French literary-criticism is truly impoverishing.

31. I argue in my forthcoming book on the Song of Songs, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, that the possibilities and limitations of language are one of its preoccupations, as indeed for any serious writer: to what extent can the lovers express their love for each other, for the world, and for their medium of communication. Clearly, the possibility for good and evil of speech is demonstrated in the Genesis 2-3 narrative, and in Wisdom literature, and expressed therein stylistically—e.g. the serpent's speech is subtle. The all-pervasiveness of this self-reflexiveness—which is especially characteristic of Virgil and late Hellenistic writing in the Greco-Roman tradition—is not a question I have explored.

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32. Roman Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', *Style in Language* (ed. Thomas A. Sebeok; Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 358. The following discussion is more or less a paraphrase of some of Jakobson's article. Jakobson has been extensively criticized, e.g. by critics such as Jonathan Culler, Michael Riffaterre, and Roger Fowler, for failing to distinguish between poetry and prose, and between degrees of relevance of equivalence; and clearly, as I hope to show, other factors are involved, that may make a simple poem sublime and a complex discourse dull. Nevertheless, Jakobson's basic insight holds, and the critics aforesaid recognize its value.

33. Note the retention of the definite article throughout this passage, in the light of its frequent omission in 'terse' poetry (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 89).

34. On the semantic level, the fig tree corresponds to the vines; the young figs to the blossom (*s^{e}mādar*); the rare verb *ḥnṭ*, 'make spicy' (related to *ḥnṭ*, 'embalm', Gen. 50.2, 26), to 'give forth fragrance'. Syntactically, the first clause— Subject-Verb-Object—matches the second, though *s^{e}mādar* is a little ambiguous: it may be a noun in apposition to *g^{e}pānîm*, but also may function as an adjective, an adverb, or an object. Phonetically, *PaGGêhā* at the end of A is matched by *w^{e}haGG^{e}Pānîm* at the beginning of B; also *ḤĀN^{e}Ṭâ*, supported by *HATT^{e}ĒNÂ*, approximates *NAT^{e}Nû*.

35. *š^{e}tūlîm b^{e}bêt yhwh*, 'planted in the house of the Lord', is both a transitional phrase whose subjects are the cedar and the palm tree of v. 13, and the somewhat indefinite 'they' of 'in the courts of our God they flourish'. This syntactic interweaving is very common in biblical poetry. M. O'Connor discusses a trope of 'mixing' by which two clauses are subordinated to two independent lines (*Hebrew Verse Structure*, 129-132, etc.), and which he describes as 'rare'; he does not consider the case in which one phrase acts as a bridge between two clauses.

36. It puzzles me why Kugel should need to do this, since, as already noted, it makes no difference in his eyes whether the line is capped by B or C. Perhaps it is only for heuristic convenience. But this raises a further point, that many verses or passages consist of chains of interlocking parallelisms (see H. Van Grol, 'Paired Tricola in the Psalms, Isaiah and Jeremiah', *JSOT* 25 [1983], 55-73).

37. Cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, 'New Directions' in *American Bulletin of Papyrologists* 15 (1978), 59-60. The pun is on the word *zāmîr*, which means both 'pruning', to complement 'the flowers' in the previous phrase, and song', to introduce the 'voice of the turtle dove' that follows. Gordon's discovery has led to the recognition of other 'Janus' parallelisms (cf. Gary Rendsburg, '"Janus Parallelism" in Genesis 49:26', *JBL* 99 [1980], 291-293).

38. 'Linguistics and Poetics', 370. Both Kugel (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 23) and O'Connor (*Hebrew Verse Structure*, 88-96) recognize this pervasiveness of parallelism, which Jakobson regards as the constitutive principle of

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poetry, and which O'Connor illustrates at length from the world's literature. Kugel, however, is concerned with the degree to which parallelism is more than paralleling, and is a distinctive feature of Hebrew style; O'Connor conceives his task as inventing an elaborate tropological typology. The difference, nevertheless, is in degree, in relative density and formality, as Kugel demonstrates; O'Connor's tropes—repetition, binomination, etc.—are only particular instances of a pervasive phenomenon.

39. Two is, of course, only a number of convenience. It is noticeable, however, that even a seven-part sequence, such as the Song of Songs 2.10-13, has a tendency to subdivide into pairs, e.g. 'For behold the winter has passed, the rain has been and gone'; and 'The fig tree makes redolent its young figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance'.

40. In a book that seems to evolve as it is being written, Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 301, eventually comes round to this view, that 'parallelism is the only meter of biblical poetry', but insists that both terms be understood in a non-tradional sense: metre is a loose and more or less deliberate regularity, while parallelism refers to the emphatic, 'seconding' function of B. Parallelism, equally, as Kugel shows, is defined by the correspondence of the clauses; it is this equivalence that is the essence of metre.

41. There is little reason to reduce the metaphorical significance of the traditional 'valley of the shadow of death' with Kugel (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 50) to 'deathly dark', in view of the clearly allegorical topography of the rest of the Psalm, and the association of *ṣalmāwet* and Sheol elsewhere in the Bible (e.g. Job 10.22).

42. Kugel suggests that *šibṭᵉkā* and *misʿantᵉkā* should perhaps be contrasted, as terms for punishment and support respectively. They are more probably, in my view, synonymous, given the overall tranquillity and assurance of the Psalm, the verb *nḥm* that both subtend, and the fact that a shepherd's staff is primarily a familiar metonymy for a shepherd, rather than an instrument of punishment.

43. This is self-evidently too vast a topic for discussion here. I do, however, find interesting and persuasive Alter's thesis that the prose medium of biblical narrative is an expression of its monotheism, and of its general theological vision and aspiration. Cf. also, Herbert Schneidau, *Sacred Discontent* (Berkeley, 1976), especially the last chapter.

44. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 59.

45. Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London, 1978).

46. By 'wish-fulfilment' I mean both the archetypal pattern of desire leading to fulfilment, as exemplified in parallelism, and, more colloquially, its fulfilment in fantasy when frustrated in reality, e.g. through poetic metaphor. For example, there is clearly a wish-fulfilling function in the Song of Songs.

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